

Episode Two: The Roar by TheIncredibleD8

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Summary: As Eleven and Mike attempt to pick up where they left off, the evil scientist Dr. Price comes face-to-face with a mysterious child that survived the monster at the lab/ Nancy and Jonathan continue searching for the missing Steve.

1. The Other Child

Welcome back! Episode two is upon us! I want to thank everyone for reading the first episode, and I received an encouraging amount of response. Thanks to everyone! Anyways, back to it!

6:39 PM

"Mom" Mike began as he jumped up from the sofa, his mom entering the house. "This is Eleven. Remember? The one who saved us?"

Karen Wheeler nearly dropped her bags as she laid eyes on the mysterious girl; shock overwhelming her. She stared into the young girl's distant eyes, slowly approaching her with an outstretched hand.

"Eleven?" Karen asked. "How... how're you here?"

It wasn't something she had exactly made clear; how she got back. In fact, the more that anyone talked about it, the more it seemed she tried to cover it up and hide the truth. It created fear and hinted towards the fact that much, much worse existed out there. *Was there a reason she couldn't tell them? Would the monsters hear her and murder them all just because she recalled the story of how she survived?*

Even now, Eleven refused to answer, retaining her fearful, silent expression.

"We... don't know, exactly" Mike said, his hands deep in his pockets. "She made it out of that place..."

Karen looked on in evident discomfort, placing her bags on the sofa as she and her husband Ted wandered closer to Eleven.

"Don't be scared of me" Karen spoke softly to the child. "I'm happy to meet you.."

Eleven took a step backwards as Ted and Karen slowly gained ground on her, not knowing what to think of the two adults. She had heard Mike speak of them often, but never imagined meeting them. In fact,

she never thought she'd escape the Upside-Down. But it was much too painful to think back to that horrible time...

Eleven, not exactly understanding the concept of a handshake, stared blankly ahead at Karen's hand. The atmosphere of awkwardness was impossible to ignore, quite frankly.

"You... you don't shake hands?" she asked, looking behind her at Ted for some sort of intervention.

Luckily, he also stepped forward, bending down a bit to her eye level.

"Hi" he spoke quickly. "We're Mike's parents".

"She knows that" Karen whispered angrily, not wanting to leave a bad first impression with the superhuman child.

"Is there any reason why... you know... you're in our house?" he questioned, everyone in the room's eyes seeming to shoot straight into Eleven.

Eleven looked on uncomfortably for a moment before rubbing her hand on the arm of the sofa, preparing to speak with reluctance.

"Lost" she said quietly, looking around aimlessly to avoid any intimidating eye contact.

"Lost?" Karen affirmed. "You're lost?"

"Yes" Eleven answered. "Lost".

Karen relaxed a bit, realizing that Eleven posed no threat. She was simply a confused, tormented child with nowhere to run. And if everything the doctors, the scientists, the police and her son said were true... that means she had also witnessed the horrors of a hell-like dimension. She deserved some form of pity. *Right?*

"Well" Karen spoke thoughtfully. "I don't imagine you can live outside alone. That lab isn't still after you, are they? The bad people?"

Eleven considered the situation. Was it better to lie and have somewhere to call home, or to tell the truth and ultimately end up

living on the streets? She knew that she valued a home above a small lie. Or was it a small lie? Hawkins would be invaded by monsters regardless, right?

After thinking the situation through, Eleven shook her head. Mike had a feeling she was telling a lie, but ignored his gut regardless. He knew that Eleven needed people to be around. She had no family and no other friends; no other roof to live under. If she couldn't stay with them, she'd live a life of loneliness, and a life of hopeless solitude. She deserved to have a home after all she'd done for them. Mike wished more than anything that she'd be able to stay; to learn, to evolve, fit in, to live a real life. He wished for her to go to the Snow Ball with him in January, and that she'd finally be able to feel happy.

"Well" Karen said. "I guess we could let you stay with us for... a few nights. You don't have *any* family? None at all?"

Eleven shook her head again; this time truthfully.

"Well" Karen spoke, turning to Ted. "I don't see why we can't let you stay, then. I mean... as long as you promise not to make our house float or something".

Mike glared at his mother's insensitive comment, but Eleven laughed lightly at her comment, turning away to look at the den.

She felt like she was home already.

Meanwhile...

Price stood in shock upon hearing an echo from down the hallway. He was just about to step out of the exit door before he heard the sound, implying that life may still exist in the laboratory besides him. He had plenty of other child experiments, but none that had worked like Eleven did for Brenner. Not even close...

"Hello?" Price's daunting voice boomed as he stepped through the hallways, making sure his gun wasn't jammed this time around. "Any survivors?"

He knew there was another form of life in the lab aside from him,

and not the monster that had escaped. There was a hole carved into the fence outside; which could have been the monster's path of escape. However, it also could have been carved by that *idiot* Rogers. *Oh, how Price wished he could tear his head right off his shoulders...*

He had outright *betrayed* him, that imbecile. However, Price knew that eventually he and Rogers would cross paths again. And when he did...

"Hello?" Price heard a voice from behind him ask as he marched through the dimly lit hall.

He turned around in a fraction of a second, coming face-to-face with one of his experiments; Experiment 015. However, he, unlike Eleven, refused to be called a number. He was commonly known as *Avan*, not that he had anyone to call him that. Behind his bright green eyes and dark, scattered blonde hair that had finally began to grow back, he was hiding worlds of agony. He had no family or friends; much like Eleven. He had nowhere to run, and nowhere to hide. And unlike Eleven, he had no superpowers; no special abilities. He was just a pitiful fourteen year old that most would consider a completely lost soul.

However, through it all, his cheekiness was never ripped away.

"Well, well, well. Good ole' Dr. Price! Looks like its just the two of us, huh? " the small child asked casually, looking around at the carnage with no hint of mental trauma.

Price tilted his head in astonishment.

"How are you... alive?" he asked slowly.

Avan shrugged as if it were no miracle.

"Hid under a bed. Works in the horror movies, so I figured it'd work for me. That thing... I never saw it, but man... sounded *nasty*".

Price rolled his eyes upon recollecting just how annoying Experiment 015 was. He had forgotten about his snarky attitude and bemusing demeanor; and oh, *how the child irked him*.

"How did *you* get out?" he asked Avan, referring to the prisoner cell of sorts that formally isolated the child.

"Well" Avan began with a deep breath. "You kinda left the door unlocked. Not very responsible for a mad scientist like you".

Price grunted, tightening his fists at his sides.

"Listen here, bud" Price started, taking a step towards the kid. "We're gonna get out of here, but I swear to God, if you say one thing about-

"Oh, no worries Price" Avan interrupted, fear of any consequences nonexistent. "I won't say a word 'bout how you trapped me here for... how long again? A month or two? Damn. But yeah, your secret's safe with me... as long as you don't pull the stunt you pulled on that other doctor".

Price breathed in sharply, taking one last glance around the hallway to insure they were safe.

"Whatever" the doctor muttered. "Let's just go".

The two moved directly to the exit door and into the outside, stepping through the hole in the fence before continuing off of the property and into the hilly woods. As they marched through the woodlands, Avan, to Price's annoyance, hummed loudly. He walked with an optimistic bounce that Price simply *dreaded*. He himself was from from a pessimist, but the unreasonable joy that radiated from the child just boiled the blood in his veins.

As they stepped over a log, Price's long, white stereotypical lab jacket hooked on to a branch, ripping the left pocket clean off.

Price cursed at the log, looking at his worn out jacket with contempt. It was easily his favorite jacket of his small collection back at the laboratory, and he didn't know if he'd ever be able to go back.

"Oh!" Avan cringed at the ripped jacket. "That sucks. But... might I ask why we're walking through the woods instead of just taking your car?"

"First off; car tires are easy to track. I wouldn't be in trouble because of the portal. We promised we'd close it, which is what I'm trying to do. I might get fined for it not being closed after the deadline, but I won't get shut down. It's that I didn't treat all my patients... the best. I claimed to use children to "evolve the human mind", but they'd see the inhumanity it takes to *push* the human mind. They're gonna be after me soon because of that bastard Rogers. He's a goody-goody. He'll spill the beans about who I am and what I do without a doubt That's why I need to kill him *now*. And secondly; why would I let the most obnoxious child I've ever met even *look* at my car?"

Avan raised his eyebrows at Price's statement.

"Well you know... if you get me to safety like a hero on a steed, maybe they wouldn't suspect any foul play. I mean, it was the other doctor's fault that the portal opened, right?"

"You were a prisoner" Price mumbled. "Of course they're going to suspect foul play!"

Avan raised his finger as if to make a point, but then promptly dropped it, biting his lip.

"But I need to keep you under watch in case you plan on spilling anything. It's probably better just to hide for now... hide and hunt down Rogers, that is".

Avan stopped walking with a shocked expression.

"You're gonna keep me prisoner... again?"

"I don't have a choice" Price grumbled. "I can't *kill* a kid, and I can't let any witnesses live. We'll find Rogers and kill him...dispose of him... then we'll find the other stupid experiment..."

"*Other* experiment?" Avan questioned.

"You know; the weird telekinetic girl. She got away because of that imbecile. She's the only one who can close the portal..."

"So this is all about closing that portal?" Avan asked again.

"Of course it is!" he exclaimed. "Why the hell else would I be after that kid? Besides... she's too dangerous to exist outside of a lab. If I close the portal and keep all witnesses at bay... I can continue making money and evolving the human mind. It's *essential* to my being..."

"Why is it?" Avan questioned. "There's plenty of other occupations out there..."

"No!" Price snapped. "Not for me! I'm a scientist... I'm a pusher".

"So?" Avan asked as they continued walking on through the heavy woods; the dead leaves from the trees crunching under their feet. "There's plenty of other things that can push you".

Price groaned.

"Why am I even having a conversation with you? You're nothing to me. You're just a failed experiment!"

"Well, I don't know if I'd say that" Avan sneered. "I think I'm a little bit more than just an experiment".

"You have no family, no friends, no life. What do you even have? You're just some lost twerp-"

"Oh, c'mon doctor" Avan retorted. "Enough trash talk. I'll give ya' my lunch money if that's what you're after".

Price had to admit that the snarky child was remarkably similar to him as a child; in fact, it was quite striking to witness. It almost pushed him to chuckle at the uncanny similarities, however, he managed to hold his amusement back with relative ease. Dr. Price was a man who certainly didn't lack control. In fact, he prided himself in being able to imprison any unwanted emotions that tried to burst out of his brain.

"I'm not after any damn lunch money" Price stated clearly. "So quit tryin' to be smart with me. You *know* what I'm after".

The two ventured on through the various twigs, trees, logs and rocks, Avan resuming his humming habits, much to Price's dismay. However, Price knew he needed to stay calm. In the outskirts of the

other side of Hawkins was the lab's storage facility; a place he knew they could hide out in until Rogers was taken care of and Eleven was captured.

Price suspected that Rogers is probably seeking refuge elsewhere. Although he never directly abused a patient or committed any wrongdoing, he was guilty of being affiliated with Price. Perhaps Rogers would hide out a few days to see if the police were after him. If not, perhaps he would spill everything to the police, singling out Price.

The difference-maker was how long it'd take for the law to realize everything was not right. Would they search the lab for the missing doctors? The beast was loose from the lab, which would soon create chaos, so perhaps they could hide under that cover for a while. Although he wanted to close the portal and end the madness, he wanted to continue being a scientist.

"So, where we goin' exactly?" Avan asked as they moved quietly.

Price turned to him.

"Cross town. There's a place there for us... can't tell you yet. You'll see..."

"How do we get all the way across town?"

"We walk".

"But won't they see us?"

"Doesn't matter" Price replied. "They don't know who I am yet, and it's dinner time. No one's gonna be out wandering the streets. We'll make it there, and we'll keep an eye out for the two targets on the way. Got it?"

Avan looked upwards at the trees and at the evening sky, laughing for no apparent reason.

"Whatever you say, captain".

Some Time Later...

"Jonathan!" Joyce Byers called to her son as he washed dishes after dinner.

"Yeah?" he responded to her, placing the plate he was washing on the counter.

"Nancy's at the door!"

Jonathan froze in place. *Nancy was at his door?* That's strange. Nancy didn't interact with Jonathan outside of Steve's presence anymore, so he found it quite odd. Steve became easily jealous when Nancy was alone with Jonathan; even in the most casual contexts.

Jonathan rushed to the door, not knowing what to expect in any way. It must be pretty big news if she had come all the way to his house on foot...

"Nancy?" he asked, opening the door and coming face to face with her. She appeared extremely nervous and cautious, looking over her shoulder once before she spoke.

"I still can't find him" Nancy spoke breathlessly. "He's not at home... he's... he's missing..."

Jonathan stepped outside into the cool winter air with the panicking Nancy, shutting the door behind him.

"Don't panic" he said. "He's probably off slashing some nerd's tires".

"Jonathan!" Nancy spoke in a raised tone. "You know-"

"I know, I know, I'm joking".

"This is no time to joke! He's *missing!*" she told him passionately, becoming frustrated with her friend. "After all that's happened... how can I not worry?"

Jonathan clenched his jaw, caught off-guard by Nancy's worry. Earlier, it had been her who was calm and well-collected. Now, she seemed to be the exact opposite.

"I want to go look for him" she suddenly proposed, turning around to face the street, night beginning to take full effect.

"Nancy" he muttered. "It's dark and with all that happened... why should we go wander around asking for trouble?"

"Because he could be in trouble!" she groaned. "Don't you get it?"

"Something in it for me?" he questioned, leaning against the doorframe. "Does he not have any parents or family looking already?"

"He doesn't have anyone who cares, Jonathan!" she spoke with evident frustration, her eyes narrowed. "What do you have against him?"

Jonathan sighed, looking off at the starry sky. Truthfully, he had a *ton* against Steve. A ten page list, if you will. Although he somewhat resembled a friend to him, he had stolen the heart of his longtime crush. Even if it was unintentional, he also boasted a habit of rubbing it in his face.

"Nancy" Jonathan grunted, scratching the back of his head. "He's probably fine. Seriously... that thing from November... it's gone, okay? We're not in any danger..."

"Jona-"

"We're not in any danger!" he snapped. The fear of the alternate dimension that ensnared his brother as well as its inhabitants truly drove him crazy. He just wanted to forget that it happened... he wanted the threat to leave his life forever.

Nancy stared at him in disbelief, not used to seeing his emotions overwhelm him.

"Sorry" he mumbled a few moments later. "Sorry, I'm just... it's a touchy subject".

Nancy nodded, her mouth slightly agape.

"Yeah..." she said, still taken aback by his sudden burst.

Jonathan glared back out at the road again, dimly lit by surrounding Christmas lights. However, this time, he had a more neutral expression.

"Well" he said, reaching back in the house to grab his jacket off the coat hanger. "Let's go find ole' Steve".

A Few Minutes Later...

For Mike, it was back to the way he liked it to be.

Lucas and Dustin had left a while prior as Mike and Eleven sat together on the staircase, conversing the events of the day. Mike's mother, Karen, decided to let her stay; providing her with a makeshift bed in the basement, which she was quite used to. She couldn't be happier to be back with her family, regardless of what she had experienced with people in the past. Although the fear of Dr. Price and the creatures from the other dimension was implanted in her heart, she decided that embracing the small moments was necessary. Serene moments as simple as sitting beside Mike on the stairs, the Christmas lights lighting up the outside and peering through the blinds and glass panels on the front door to create a glowing atmosphere.

"Eleven?" Mike asked over the rattle of pans from the kitchen, as well as his panicked mother's voice on the telephone, discussing the missing Nancy who Mike assumed simply snuck out to hang out with Steve again at *his* house.

She turned to him, brushing her fingers through her hair as if she was trying to itch her head. Her hair was by no means long, but it was certainly longer than when she had disappeared in the school.

"Yes?" she asked simply in her usual calm, soft tone.

"If you don't mind me asking" he started, "do you know what your name was before you were Eleven?"

She sniffed, leaning back against the stairs in relaxed fashion. She then shook her head, making it clear that she only knew herself by

one identity: Eleven.

"If you could" Mike said. "Would you want to know?"

She shrugged, blinking a few times before answering verbally.

"Maybe" she spoke honestly.

Mike smiled.

"I'd be curious to know too. I mean... El is a good name and all, but I'd be cool to have *two* names, wouldn't it?"

He spoke with a very sincere, innocent voice, which made El feel rather strange. She certainly wasn't one for emotion, but what had happened at the school... it shook her internally in quite frankly all the best ways.

Eleven then suddenly looked concerned as the commotion on the phone intensified, his mother beginning to cry from the stress of not knowing her daughter's location. Due to her crying, Holly begin to sob as well, creating a scene of chaos as Eleven and Mike listened from the stairs.

"Oh, don't worry" Mike said, noticing her concern. "She runs away sometimes. Goes to Steve's house. It's nothing new, really".

Eleven blinked in affirmation, staring down the stairs again.

"Nancy?" she asked Mike.

"Yeah. She's somewhere... probably Steve, like I said".

Eleven looked fearfully at the front door with wide eyes, rubbing her hands together anxiously.

"Others" she said again, echoing her concerns from earlier.

"Others? You mean from the Upside-Down? Oh, don't worry. If they were here, why would they go after Nancy?"

Eleven looked deep into his eyes, her concern still obvious from just

one glance.

"I don't know" she answered.

2. The Search

Meanwhile...

"Can you explain why we're in the grocery store again?" Avan asked Dr. Price as they strolled through the aisles of canned food. They had wandered from the lab and into town, heading to the grocery store for reasons Dr. Price had yet to disclose.

"Isn't it obvious?" he asked. "We might be hidin' out a while. You don't expect to survive without food and water, do you?"

"I still don't get why we're playing hide and seek. I thought you just wanted to kill that Rogers guy" the child stated.

"We can't expect to locate him in one day" Price retaliated. "And if the police pay a visit to the lab, it's better we not be in the open. Besides; you don't have a family anyway, do you?"

"*Hiding*" Avan scoffed. "Why don't you just face the consequences?"

"I've told you already, kid" Price exclaimed. "I didn't get the portal closed by the deadline like I said I would. People at the lab died because of that. There could be evidence of me abusing patients... or whatever. Even the portal thing is enough to get me detained".

"And what if the thing that escaped... what if that drowns the concern for the lab, or the missing doctors? People are gonna go missing anyway. Wouldn't hiding out just be useless?"

Price slammed his palm on his face, halting in the middle of the aisle.

"Then I'll worry about it when it *happens*! I don't have anyone to go home to, okay? Neither do you. We aren't missing anything by hiding out! I'm playing it safe like I *should*".

"Whatever, captain. I just hope you find Mr. Goody-goody quickly so I can live my life free of mad scientists for once..." Avan muttered, pacing alongside Dr. Price as he tossed various cans into the grocery cart.

"You mean Rogers?" Price asked.

"Yeah, the guy you tried to shoot" Avan recalled jeeringly.

Suddenly, as they reached the end of the aisle, a police officer stepped out from behind the end of it, staring them down suspiciously.

"You gentleman care to elaborate on this lab situation?" he asked bluntly, having overheard their entire conversation.

Price noticed his name tag, and quickly mentally wrote down the name.

Officer Hopper.

"Lab?" Price asked, knowing he was caught dead in his tracks. *Should have been quieter.*

"Damn right" Hopper sternly spoke. "I heard everything".

Price took a moment to act like he was thinking, placing his hand underneath his chin. However, just a moment after doing this, he lashed out. He noticed that Hopper had not yet retrieved his handgun, so he took advantage of the moment.

He struck Hopper on the head with his elbow and kned him to the ground, Avan standing still in shock directly behind him. Hopper's head hit against the linoleum floor with a "pop", knocking the officer clean out.

Price looked around frantically, knowing attention would be headed their way very soon.

"Come on!" he said to the child, leaving the grocery cart behind. The two of them sprinted out of the store and into the winter air, the store's Christmas lights lighting up the downtown streets. Although they tried their hardest not to look suspicious, their detectable urgency was as easy to read as a magazine.

They ran out of the city lights and into the shadows of a few scattered trees, heading in the general direction of the storage facility

owned by Price. He didn't know what they'd do about food now, but he was out of options. He had assaulted a police officer... the officer knew. He should've shot him while he had the chance...

"Are we... are we going the right way, Captain Price?" Avan asked, out of breath as they ran into the night.

"Yeah" Price grunted. "There's only one way now..."

Chief Hopper sat up, looking around with a dazed expression. He felt a throbbing pain on the top of his skull, and he felt quite dizzy. He looked around at the concerned shoppers surrounding him, slowly getting to his feet.

Then he remembered.

"Officer, are you okay?" a man nearby asked, to which he nodded swiftly.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine" he said, ushering them away to give him more space as he found his balance. He immediately took out his radio, lifting it to his ear with some amount of urgency.

"Hopper to station: we need every available unit to the Hawkins Laboratory! Now!" he spoke loudly, making his way towards the door of the store.

He ran outside and whipped open the door to his car, jumping inside. He then closed the door as quickly as possible, cranking the car and shifting the gear to "gas". He glanced back at the curious onlookers in the grocery store, staring at him from the other side of the glass as he pulled away into uncertainty. He had no idea where the man went, but he swore that he'd find him. No one assaulted a police officer and got away with it...

"All available units are headed to Hawkins Laboratory. Over" a voice replied in his radio for confirmation.

"Good" he spoke back into it as he drove. "I'm on my way there too. Over".

Hopper was now a very determined man. He was going to find this

crook if it was the last thing he did. What about the child? Should he be considered guilty also? Surely he was affiliated in some way...

Hopper stepped on the gas as his car siren blared, beelining for the lab. His pulse increased ten-fold as he drove, gripping his hands on the steering wheel as he peered out his windshield and into the night...

Justice would soon be served.

Meanwhile...

"Gives me the creeps just being back here" Jonathan said in reference to Steve's pool as they crept around his property, not wanting to attract attention from his parents. They concluded that if he had passed out from being drunk or something of the like, he'd be somewhere near his home.

"Yeah" Nancy sighed. "I really miss her... Barb I mean. She didn't deserve it..."

Nancy glanced down at the cold ground with a look of sullen regret. She regretted ever leaving Barb's side, although she was grateful for her boyfriend. Looking back in hindsight, perhaps she could have had the best of both worlds. She could have had both of them if she hadn't pushed Barb away. Oh, how she regretted it...

"Yeah, it sucks to lose a friend" Jonathan spoke honestly, glancing back up at the pool. "Well, at least we know he didn't drown".

Nancy scoffed.

"Are we expecting him to be *dead* or something?"

Jonathan shrugged, unable to keep a smirk from creeping onto his face.

"Maybe not dead, but... nothing's impossible".

Nancy thought back to the whole incident in November; when she sighted the "man with no face" a few meters away from their current

location.

"You're right about that" she sighed, growing weary as they crept around his yard. She just didn't understand *how* Steve disappeared. Why? Why would he do this to her a week from Christmas? He better have a good explanation...

After a good twenty minutes, the two came to the conclusion that Steve was nowhere on his family's property. Although it narrowed down the list of places to search, it also caused Nancy to worry even more.

They walked back to Jonathan's truck quietly, feeling somewhat down after failing to locate their friend. The mere thought of Will's disappearance further amplified their fears.

Jonathan and Nancy hopped back into Jonathan's truck as Nancy began to feel her eyes welling up; her fears swelling in size as she buckled her seatbelt.

"Nance?" Jonathan asked her upon noticing her state of emotional turmoil. "You alright?"

She shook her head, motioning for him to start the car.

"It's fine... the best thing to do is just keep looking..."

Jonathan knew that eventually it would be too late at night to be driving around looking for Steve, but he also knew that Nancy would not want to give up. She simply wouldn't be able to settle down with her boyfriend missing.

"We can't keep this up all night" Jonathan told her, not yet starting the car. "I know you're scared, but..."

"Don't say that" Nancy spoke in hopeful voice. "I'll keep this up as long as I have to".

"You'll wear yourself out! We aren't even sure he's in danger!"

"Doesn't matter" Nancy retorted. "He's missing, and he could be dead! You can't expect me to just... *give up!*"

"I don't expect you to, but I *need* you to. My mom went *crazy* over Will... she lost her damn mind, okay? She didn't sleep for nights! I can't see that happen to you..."

Nancy noticed Jonathan's mix of passion and sincerity. He truly *couldn't* see it happen to her. It would hurt him inside...

"I don't know... what to do..." she muttered, holding her hands over her face. "I don't know where to look... where he's gone..."

Jonathan looked at her with his hands on the steering wheel, the car still not cranked. He knew exactly how she felt; hopeless, empty, frustrated. It was a violent flurry of emotions that sadly, he was very familiar with.

"I know it's hard" Jonathan told her. "But chances are he'll be back by the time you wake up tomorrow. You... you don't have to worry..."

"Yeah" Nancy said solemnly, her voice now lifeless. "I have to worry now. After what happened... it'd be stupid not to worry, and you know it".

"Yeah, but worrying just means you suffer twice, Nancy" Jonathan told her. "I learned that the hard way. Everything worked out in the end-"

"Not everything works out happily! Barb is *dead*! Maybe in your life, but in mine?" she asked in a frustrated voice, glaring at him. "No".

"Nancy, don't-"

"Don't *what*?! Be realistic?! He's probably in that hellhole! He's gonna end up like Barb" she feared, wiping the tears from her cheeks.

"The portal's closed!" Jonathan persuaded her. "There's no way he's in that place! He's here, Nancy! We might not find him tonight... but thinking he's gone to some dimension that's closed off now... how is that realistic?"

She shook her head, staring out the car window and into the chilly night. It was crazy to think, but if the events involving the monster in November had not happened, they would have never even met. They

wouldn't have solved the mystery. They wouldn't be sitting in Jonathan's truck beside Steve's Harrington's home.

Then again, if that *stupid* lab hadn't have existed, they wouldn't be going through this trouble in the first place.

"So, just give up?" Nancy asked, feeling defeated. "Just go home and forget that he's missing?"

"Don't forget" Jonathan said, "just think optimistically. I mean... it's not easy..."

"Of course it's not" Nancy mumbled. "And it's not gonna happen".

Jonathan sighed, cranking his car as he bit his lip, close to becoming emotional as well.

"Can I take you home?" Jonathan asked her. "Your mom's gonna get worried".

Nancy thought about his question. Although she desired to continue searching for her boyfriend, she didn't want to create any more stress by evading her mother. She knew she had to get back home before any more conflict erupted.

"Yeah" she breathed. "Take me home".

Two Hours Later...

Price twisted the key inside the lock as his hand shook; partially from the winter air, and partly due to the situation he had created. Price had struck down the police chief of Hawkins; Officer Hopper. He knew the consequences would now be amplified harshly, and that it probably would have been better to kill him while he had the chance. Now, the officer would almost certainly beeline for the laboratory, discovering the live portal, as well as the many dead doctors and patients. He'd be a convict for life.

"So" Avan groaned, out of breath from all the running. "Guess going to look for that Rogers guy and the other experiment is out of the question".

Price sighed through his nostrils, finally succeeding in opening the metal door to the laboratory.

"For now" Price said. "I should've killed that officer".

"But then wouldn't it be easier to track us?" Avan asked. "If you shot him? I mean, I'm no genius, but it's not often people get away with murder".

"But it's not impossible" Price countered. "I've done it before. It's all but necessary sometimes".

"All *but* necessary" Avan told him. "So it's not necessary".

"Shut up, kid" Price spoke as they walked into the dark back room. "You don't want me to knock you senseless like I did that Hopper guy".

Avan laughed as Price switched on the lights, illuminating the small room filled with various carts, boxes, trunks and shelves. Price continued through the room after locking the door behind him. Avan took a moment to observe his surroundings, his eyes skeptical as he noted the obvious lack of hospitality.

"So this is where you're holding me captive?" he called ahead to Price who had continued walking forward.

"Yep" he called back. "You better follow me unless you want to be locked in here all night".

Avan rushed to catch up with the assertive doctor, knowing the storage room was not heated, and that he'd probably wake up with hypothermia in the morning if he were to opt into staying there for the night. Price had locked the door, so there was no escape for him.

"And where are we *going* exactly?" he questioned the man, at his side again as they marched toward another door.

"You don't ever shut up, do you?"

"Well, when I'm being held prisoner, I at least like to *know* a bit of what's going on. What's wrong with that?"

Dr. Price stopped in front of the door, glaring down at the child.

"Everything is wrong with that. You're of no importance to me! You could tumble off the highest mountain on the damn planet and I wouldn't blink an eye! I don't have to tell you anything, you cretin!"

Avan raised his eyebrows and pursed his lower lip in offense, but didn't dare retaliate. If he had a place to stay for the night, he didn't want to protest. He had no family, no friends to go home to...

Price opened the door and ushered the child inside, closing the door behind him. Avan looked around the sizable room, but saw no beds; simply an empty, white painted room the size of a typical bedroom with a single mattress on the ground. At the far end of the room appeared to be the small, wooden door to a closet.

"Um" Avan muttered. "There's one mattress".

"Yeah?" Price spoke, locking the door behind them once again. "And?"

"Am I supposed to sleep on the floor? 'Cause I politely refuse to sleep in a bed with you".

Price cringed, looking at the child irritably.

"Damnit, kid! I'm not that crooked! You're sleeping in *there*" he said, pointing to the closet.

"Oh" Avan said. "That's a good bit better. But still... a closet?"

"You're in no position to be a chooser, bud" Price stated. "We'll go get food in the morning, after we find some sort of makeshift disguise..."

"Stuck in a closet all night" Avan grumbled. "You gonna lock it too?"

"Of *course* I'm gonna lock it! You could be a psychopathic kid for all I know! You could try to kill me".

Avan chuckled, walking towards the closet.

"Whatever you say, captain".

Suddenly, however, the door to the closet burst open, the hooded figure of a man bursting out, pointing a gun directly at Dr. Price. Price eyed him down with his hands in the air, trying his best not to appear as a threat.

"Oh, I just *knew* you'd show up" the figure spoke, and Price immediately recognized his husky voice, also noticing his short, stocky stature as he studied him further.

He continued holding his hands high, narrowing his eyes.

"Rogers?" Price asked.

The figure held his gun steady, removing his hood with the other hand, revealing himself to indeed be Rogers. He had correctly guessed Price's next course of action; retreating to the storage facility as a method of escaping his crimes. He made sure to equip himself with a firearm before encountering Price, finally attempting to rid the world of the scum known as the new lead scientist.

"Stay back" Rogers warned, his eyes tired and full of contempt for the man in front of him. "I ain't afraid to pull the trigger".

Price visibly relaxed as he studied the weapon in Rogers' hand, a smirk suddenly on his face as he pushed his messy hair out of his face, no longer seeming cautious.

"Put your hands up! Now!" Rogers yelled.

"Where'd you get the gun, Rodge?" Price questioned, beginning to step towards him. "Off the shelf in the storage room?"

Rogers remained firm, rubbing his pointer finger upon the trigger as his pulse pounded.

"What's it to you?" he asked. "It'll kill you all the same".

Price nodded his head, stopping about ten feet in front of Rogers with his eyes closed. He snickered to himself, causing more and more concern to leak from Rogers.

"The hell you laughin' about?" he demanded to know.

Price looked into his eyes again with confidence.

"Off the shelf, huh?" Price said, trying to stall. He knew the weapon was loaded, but he also knew another thing that Rogers had failed to realize.

The safety on the handgun was on.

"Stop talking!" Rogers shouted. "Put your hands in the air!"

Price smiled again; this time seeming a bit more determined.

"Now, now Rogers... let's not make this hard..." he said calmly. "Put the gun down, and we can talk about this".

Rogers would not budge.

"Shut up, you lowlife! You smacked around a child! God knows what you were about to do to that one..."

Price rolled his eyes.

"I'll give ya five seconds to put the gun down" Price said. "Okay?"

Rogers laughed loudly, knowing he was at the advantage in the situation.

"What are *you* gonna do? You ain't no experiment that can levitate me and stuff. Go ahead! Give me a reason to shoot!"

Price retained his grin.

"Five... four... three..."

Rogers laughed again, aiming down the sights on his handgun.

"Do it, Price!"

"Two..." he spoke, staring straight at Rogers menacingly as Avan hid a few feet behind him.

"Try me!" Rogers screamed.

"One... zero".

Ooh! That's an evil cliffhanger if I've ever seen one! Anyways-just think of it as a commercial break. Don't go anywhere! We'll be right back...